

by settlement in the Cape Fear and then by the peopling of the West, the northeastern population became proportionally less significant. By 1767, the Albemarle Sound region contained 17 percent of the province's inhabitants, down from 26 percent in 1755, and the Neuse-Pamlico, 15 percent, down from 18 percent in 1755.

Blacks represented a significant proportion of the populace. They constituted 36 and 28 percent of the inhabitants of the Albemarle Sound and Neuse-Pamlico regions respectively in 1767. At that time one-fourth of the province's black populace resided in the Albemarle Sound region; one-sixth in the Neuse-Pamlico region. The annual percentage increase in the black population in both areas exceeded that of the whites, though it was lower than in all other areas of the colony. Natural increase and immigration explained the surge in the number of blacks, the latter accounting for perhaps half of the augmentation.

Lying beyond the Albemarle and Neuse-Pamlico areas was Northampton County. Its population of approximately 8,000 in 1767, was exceeded in the study area only by that of Craven. One-third of Northampton's population was black, and the population of both blacks and whites was increasing at a rate slightly greater than that of the older counties and North Carolina as a whole.

Slavery was pervasive throughout the study area. The acute need for labor, plus the proximity of the Indians and the antipathy of the Europeans towards the aboriginals, led to the common practice of enslaving Indians early in the proprietary era. As was the case generally in the American colonies of the European powers, Indian slavery failed to endure on a major scale, forcing the whites to resort to indentured servitude and then to African slavery to obviate the labor shortage that afflicted the Provinces. Imported from the western shores of Africa, mostly by way of the West Indies, and also brought through Virginia, bondsmen in North Carolina increased in absolute numbers as well as relative to whites. Tax lists for Chowan County in 1772 and for Perquimans County in 1772 show that 52 and 53 percent of the households respectively contained slave taxables, the highest in the colony.

Supplementing slavery as a labor institution was indentured servitude. Servants, crucially important in peopling the southern colonies, were well represented. Bertie County tax lists for 1763 and 1768 show that indentured servants made up one-fourth to one-third of the free taxable population of the county. The servants appeared in a quarter of the Bertie households, though more than 70 percent of those families registered only one taxable servant and none had more than four. After the Revolution the institution of indentured servitude dwindled in significance as slavery grew to paramount importance in the nonfree labor market.

The presence of slaves and servants promoted an alarmingly inequitable distribution of wealth in colonial North Carolina. In their investigations